

Introduction

Thomas Austin

The cover image for this book, taken from *Mies vailla menneisyyttä* (The Man without a Past, 2002), captures the arresting moment when the protagonist M (Markku Peltola), having been violently beaten and robbed, then pronounced dead by a doctor, rises from his hospital bed to resume his life, but as a homeless amnesiac. By the end of the film, this penniless Lazarus has found a place to live in a marginal but supportive community, a romantic partner, and a job as manager of a rock band. Like many of Aki Kaurismäki's films, *The Man without a Past* is a socially engaged work that complicates realist aesthetics, employing a self-conscious and highly allusive style. It is both a political response to pressing issues of inequality and injustice in neoliberal Europe and a playful utopian fable. Over the past three decades, this distinct approach, centred on ludic interventions that are simultaneously serious and comic, relayed in a style that combines mimetic and performative modes,¹ referentiality and artifice, realism and anti-realism, has made Kaurismäki a vital auteur in European cinema. Yet his oeuvre, encompassing 17 feature films, two music documentaries, a television movie and numerous shorts, remains surprisingly under-researched in Anglophone scholarship. This collection aims to redress such neglect, and to interrogate the politics and aesthetics of his compelling body of work, from *Rikos ja rangaistus* (Crime and Punishment) in 1983 to the film which may be his last, 2017's *Toivon tuolla puolen* (The Other Side of Hope).²

It would be easy to stereotype Kaurismäki's films as drily humorous dramas populated by taciturn underdogs, presented in a predictable style that recycles particular techniques and eschews others.³ (The former would include: a largely static camera, underplayed performance style, ironic tone, and a soundtrack comprised of early 1960s rock and roll along

with Tchaikovsky or Shostakovich.) But this is too simplistic. His output is far from monolithic, and while it evinces important aesthetic and thematic continuities, it also displays a sometimes startling range in both of these dimensions. As Jaakko Seppälä's recent research makes clear, "Just because Kaurismäki's oeuvre is recognizably different from that of other filmmakers, does not mean it is stylistically homogeneous."⁴ In addition, Kaurismäki has drawn on a wide range of genres and modes including romance, road movie, film noir and silent melodrama.

Crucial elements of diversity across Kaurismäki's films, along with key continuities, become more evident if one considers his work via the prism of *incongruity*. Discrepancies in narrative content, actor performance and mise en scene provide a source of both humour and political significance, some aspects of which I will adumbrate here. First, his scripts consistently accord attention to unremarkable characters whose insecure labour conditions make them members of neoliberalism's precariat (shoeshiner, security guard, unemployed hostess, factory worker, unemployed miner, dustman, cashier, etc). Secondly, casting decisions confound dominant practice by ensuring that such protagonists are played by actors who are not conventionally good looking, but who are emphatically not comic grotesques played for laughs, as one might expect them to be in much of normative cinema. This comparative incongruity in relation to dominant expectations of scripting and casting is thus a political gesture, one that is considered further in chapters one and five. Third, incongruity is generative of humour. Sight gags involving objects out of place abound in Kaurismäki, from the payphone on the side of a ramshackle Siberian barn in *Leningrad Cowboys Go America* (1989) to the pineapple carried by Inspector Monet (Jean-Pierre Darroussin) in *Le Havre* (2011). (Kaurismäki's displaced objects are discussed in chapters two and four.) Other visual jokes are grounded on comic exaggeration, or by unexpected revelations of previously unseen space. For example, in *La Vie de Bohème* (1992) Marcel

(André Wilms) is drowning his sorrows following a publisher's rejection of his play for being too long when the barman offers to read the manuscript. To the surprise of both the barman and the audience, Marcel heaves an enormous stack of papers on to the bar, -- "*The Avenger*, a play in 21 acts". In *Kauas pilvet karkaavat* (Drifting Clouds, 1996), the unemployed Ilona (Kati Outinen) finds work in a downmarket bar. When two customers order food, she walks towards the kitchen, opens the hatch and repeats their order. Only when she enters the kitchen herself and picks up a frying pan does it become apparent that there is no cook, and that she is doubling up as both cook and waitress.

Finally, performance style and production design in Kaurismäki's films reject the realist aesthetics commonly associated with socially-engaged content as in the work of the Dardenne brothers or Ken Loach, who share thematic preoccupations with Kaurismäki, but who are much more concerned with achieving verisimilitude. One of the most obvious instances of this strategy is a laconic and consistently understated performance style which requires that actors refrain from conventionally expressive vocal, facial and bodily gestures, and adopt instead a deadpan delivery of dialogue, even when their characters are confronted with stressful, violent and melodramatic situations (analysed further in chapters eight, nine and ten). If incongruity is "in Wittgensteinian terms [...] a rule that has not been followed",⁵ then acting in Kaurismäki's films fails to follow the rules of both naturalistic and expressive performance conventions. Instead, through repetition, it ultimately constitutes a new set of conventions that might be termed Kaurismäkian: "There is an iron law. I have it understandable to all, in English: 'I do not want acting in my movies.' The performer should definitely play, but so you cannot tell. He should not wave his hands about or cry."⁶ Undemonstrative performances occur throughout Kaurismäki's films, and can be generative of both humour and pathos. For instance, in *The Man Without A Past* M tries to open a bank account, but is interrupted by an armed robber, who apologetically locks M and the cashier

in the vault. M deadpans to the cashier in a fatalistic tone, "It didn't work out then." "What?" she asks. "Opening the account." Having been arrested by the police, M is rescued by a nameless lawyer, who overwhelms a shell-shocked detective with his precise legal reasoning before presenting M with a cigar. In contrast to M's hangdog demeanour and the curt one-liners he exchanges with the policemen, the lawyer appears both benign and incongruously verbose, albeit in a highly professional manner. (He is played by real life lawyer and MEP Matti Wuori.) By playing this second tense situation in an emotionless and blank manner Peltola as M offers the humour of incongruity, while the contrasting profusion of detail in Wuori's vocal performance appears disjunctive in the Kaurismäkian universe. The refusal of naturalism and foregrounding of artifice in actor performance is matched by Kaurismäki's predilection for production design that is rich in anachronistic objects, particularly vehicles, furniture and decor from the mid-twentieth century. These anachronisms in the mise en **scene** are paralleled by the repeated use of 'dated' music, particularly rock and roll music, Finnish tango, and Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky. The political implications of these choices are explored in chapters one and two.

Over time, the unconventional choices discussed here have been consolidated into a recognisable -- but never static -- aesthetic, a signature style that provides a 'dominant' from which Kaurismäki occasionally deviates, as in the example of Matti Wuori above. Such aberrations from his own norms enable Kaurismäki to generate impact and surprise from moves that might appear unremarkable in the work of other filmmakers. Some examples of how Kaurismäki figures the interiority of his often tongue-tied characters will serve to elaborate this point. Emotional and psychological depth is largely displaced from dialogue and performance and is instead coded via lighting, mise en scene, and music.⁷ Kaurismäki notes: "The music has a similar function to that in a dance hall where people are too shy to

talk and leave the songs to make the conversation.”⁸ For instance, during a trip to the sea-side in *Varjoja paratiisissa* (Shadows in Paradise, 1986), music is deployed along with framing, offscreen space and editing to externalise and amplify the feelings of Nikander (Matti Pellonpää) and Ilona (Kati Outinen). The sequence centres on their cautious mutual desire. Shy, hesitant, and uncertain of each other, they book into separate hotel rooms and shake hands goodnight. An eyeline match then connects the two as they look towards their closed bedroom doors; Ilona is listlessly reading a magazine, Nikander is smoking in bed. The next day, the couple sit on a windy beach with their backs to the camera, looking out to sea and not touching. The radio is playing “Salattu Suru” performed by Topi Sorsakoski and Agents, a rather mournful cover of The Renegades’ “My Heart Must Do The Crying”. Now shown frontally, Nikander casts a shy sidelong glance, then embraces Ilona, pushing her to ground. The long-awaited kiss happens in offscreen space, implied by a metonymic closeup on Ilona’s immobile left hand resting on the sand, still holding a cigarette. Not a word has been said at the beach, in a scene lasting just over half a minute.

In the years since *Shadows in Paradise* Kaurismäki’s use of similarly understated and carefully choreographed performances has become so familiar that it can be pared down and used in a highly economic fashion that borders on self-parody. For example, in *Le Havre*, ageing shoeshiner Marcel Marx (André Wilms) arranges for florist Mimi (Mimi Piazza) to reunite with her estranged husband, rock singer Little Bob (Roberto Piazza). When Mimi enters the bar where Little Bob is drowning his sorrows, gently building strings are heard on the soundtrack and a white spotlight suddenly foregrounds them both, while Marcel backs away into shadow. The couple don’t touch, merely smile and say each other’s names, and the reconciliation scene is complete.

Set against this matrix of familiar techniques, Kaurismäki can construct surprising deviations, perhaps the most striking of which is Valto's daydream in *Pidä huivista kiinni, Tatjana* (Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatiana, 1994). This brief fantasy sequence is particularly egregious in a body of work that circumscribes much dramatic action, often banishing moments of violence to off-screen space, and prohibiting characters from laughing, crying, and even running.⁹ The opening sequence of the film shows three biker couples speeding through an anonymous Finnish town. Each motorcycle is ridden by a man, with a woman riding 'side-saddle' behind in a dress or skirt and headscarf, a 1960s fashion which gives the film its title.¹⁰ Following the title card, the film cuts to a closeup of a sewing machine, and the noise of the motorbikes is replaced by the rhythmic sound of the needle as the camera pulls out to reveal the huge figure of Valto (Mato Valtonen), sat in his mother's kitchen, making clothes. The contrasts with the preceding bikers are many: the freedom and unpredictability of the road versus the familiar confines of a domestic interior; mobile leisure against sedentary, almost static, labour; the differing gendered associations of motorbike and sewing machine; the bikers' heterosexual pairings followed by a grown man who lives with his mother. On the kitchen radio The Renegades' "If I had someone to dream of" reiterates Valto's aberrant position outside the logic of heterosexual coupling.

The song is also a subtle indication of the Bunuelian strand that runs throughout Kaurismäki's most oneiric film. Having driven his alcoholic male friend Reino (Matti Pellonpää) and two female Soviet tourists on a taciturn and desultory road trip from the northern countryside to Helsinki to catch the ferry home, Valto returns to Finland alone, since Reino has stayed in Estonia with his new love Tatjana (Outinen). In an unmarked fantasy sequence which only becomes recognisable as such in retrospect, Valto drives his Volga estate, once again laden with the three passengers, through the plate-glass window of a

cafe, pulls up and orders a small coffee. The television at the counter is playing The Renegades performing “Girls girls girls” live on stage. The grainy footage fills the screen for a minute before the image cuts to Valto looking back from the counter to the now empty car, followed by a relatively rare medium closeup of his impassive face. Perhaps more than any other image in cinema, the close-up of the human face is a surface that conventionally implies intimate access to, and knowledge of, the ‘truth’ of the human subject. As Mary Ann Doane notes, “It is barely possible to see a close-up of a face without asking: what is he/she thinking, feeling, suffering? What is happening beyond what I can see?”¹¹ Valto’s blank face gives little away and as the song ends, accompanied by the screams of the audience, he returns to the car in silence. The cafe has been replaced by a small roadside kiosk. The libidinal energy of “Girls girls girls” parallels the shock of Valto’s unexpected action at the wheel, but it also reaffirms his exclusion from a heteronormative economy of desire. Alone, he returns to his mother’s house, hangs up his jacket, lets her (dusty but uncomplaining) out of the cupboard in which he had locked her before the trip, and sits down to resume his sewing. In a gesture of circularity, the camera tracks in to the needle of the sewing machine, reversing the track out of the first post-credits shot, and inviting the questions: Was the entire film, not just the car crash, Valto’s daydream? Did the drama take place only in his mind?

[Insert Figure 0.1. here]

**Figure 0.1: Valto (Mato Valtonen) and friends in *Take Care of Your Scarf Tatiana*. ©
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I have argued that a dynamic of repetition and difference, dominants and deviations, is evident across Kaurismäki's output. However, it is impossible to approach his body of work without also taking into account the media persona that he has cultivated over three decades. As the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* commented in 2008: "In the course of his thirty year career Kaurismäki has given hundreds of interviews, ranging from Finnair's in-flight magazine to the communist newspaper *Tiedonantaja*. Yet in the opinion of most people, he avoids publicity."¹² Kaurismäki's paradoxical public identity is not only that of the reluctant interviewee. It also oscillates between gloomy clown and highly competent cinephile. He is happy to perform in self-deprecating deadpan as a morose heavy drinker who hates his own films.¹³ This self-presentation exists alongside that of the thoughtful and cultured auteur, as evident in extended discussions with writers such as Peter von Bagh and in some film festival appearances. Kaurismäki's success as a businessman in a highly competitive market is less frequently on show. For instance, Peter von Bagh's *Aki Kaurismäki*, a book of interviews and film analyses published in Finnish in 2006 and translated into German and French the same year, is a vital resource on Kaurismäki's thinking and filmmaking practices, but one that downplays economic considerations.¹⁴ Instead what emerges most clearly from the book is the extent of Kaurismäki's cinephilia (citing, among others, Ozu, Bunuel, Bresson and Sirk), paired with a non-conformist disdain for conventional expectations of how to be a filmmaker in Finland. These attitudes, along with his handling of media and business operations, have enabled him to forge an aesthetically distinct body of work that is grounded in Finnish history, society and culture but also reaches well beyond them, and in the process to achieve the status of an international auteur.

Speaking about the surprise success of his third feature, *Shadows in Paradise*, Kaurismäki tells von Bagh:

at the time in Finland it was totally unthinkable to make a film about a dustman and a supermarket cashier without guns, or more generally about something equally banal. [...] In the 1980s, filmmakers suffered from a kind of aggrandisement. They thought only of international success, even though the conquest of the world was hardly going to be a resounding triumph. Paradoxically, with its trivial subject matter, *Shadows* was the first Finnish film about which one could speak of a certain amount of international success.¹⁵

As Andrew Nestingen argues, Kaurismäki's persona and films "prod us to rethink the fundamental categories and binary oppositions that often structure popular and scholarly discussions of film authorship".¹⁶ He is an auteur who "derides cinema as commerce" while embracing "elements of the same commercial cinema", a bohemian who is also an entrepreneur, operating bars and restaurants as well as film production and distribution companies.¹⁷ Thus, much like auteur cinema itself, Kaurismäki's bohemianism "occupies a position of symbolic opposition to the mainstream, yet is also historically, institutionally, and economically entangled with it."¹⁸ Kaurismäki "must engage in attention-getting action within a media field defined by the economic forces [he] is seeking to critique [via his films]".¹⁹

These performances of self can also be approached via Thomas Elsaesser's notion of a "paradoxical kind of autonomy and agency" that is key to the functioning of auteurs in a globalized marketplace.²⁰ He notes "the extraordinary dependency of most of the world's non-Hollywood filmmakers on festivals for validation, recognition and cultural capital", and points to the uncomfortable mix of dependence and claims to independence in 21st cen-

tury film authorship.²¹ Elsaesser proposes Alexander Sokurov as an exemplar of this phenomenon: “A sign of his own awareness of his dependency on a variety of non-commercial ‘art cinema’ funds and investors is Sokurov’s consistent habitus of rebellious insubordination in interviews, ‘performing’ the radical free spirit and independent auteur, both on and off film sets.”²² Kaurismäki might be suspected of a similar performed non-compliance. Like Sokurov, he has had to do business with international institutions and media companies while avowing his independence. Nevertheless, from the early years of his career, he has maintained a significant degree of autonomy by keeping his production budgets low, retaining financial control and the rights to his films.²³ In this context, Kaurismäki’s own interview appearances, by turns pugnacious, self-deprecatory and melancholic, have worked in tandem with his film output to establish and consolidate a recognisable media persona, the auteur as brand.

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In the early 1980s, Aki Kaurismäki and his older brother Mika established the production company, Villealfa, which co-funded films by both brothers. Kaurismäki set up his own production company, Sputnik, in 1989, while Mika founded Marianna Films. Sputnik’s first production was the television film *Likaiset kädet* (1989), Kaurismäki’s adaptation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s play *Les Mains Sales*. Since then it has co-funded all Kaurismäki’s films apart from *I Hired a Contract Killer* (1990), along with a handful of titles by other directors. Sputnik has repeatedly secured financial support from the Finnish Film Foundation and the European Union Media Programme. The company also distributed the art cinema classics *Seven Samurai* (1954) and *L’Atalante* (1934) in Finland in the 2000s. Accounts for 2016 show revenue of €144,000, down from €621,000 in 2013, most probably reflecting the long gap from the release of *Le Havre* in 2011 to *The Other Side of Hope* in 2017.²⁴

In addition to the above film-related business interests, the Kaurismäki brothers co-own the Helsinki entertainment complex Andorra, established in 1993. This houses two bars -- Corona, a New York style-bar, and the Soviet-style Kafe Moskva -- in addition to Kino Andorra, "a movie theatre from the good old days", and a small concert / event venue, Dubrovnik.²⁵ (Kino Andorra does not feature regular film programs, but is rented by different film festivals, used for premieres, seminar events and press screenings.) The complex and the Kaurismäki brothers also owned a film import company Senso Films, established in 1987, which distributed both domestic and foreign art house films in Finland, but is no longer in business. Aki Kaurismäki also owns real estate in Karkkila, a small town in Southern Finland, where he resides when in Finland. In addition he is a partner in the Zetor restaurant, established by Mato Valtonen, leader of the Finnish rock group the Leningrad Cowboys, who appear in several of Kaurismäki's films.

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The Other Side of Hope premiered at the 2017 Berlin Film Festival as this manuscript was being completed. The film begins with two parallel stories that ultimately converge. Sherwan Haji plays Khaled, a Syrian mechanic who has lost most of his family in the bombing of Aleppo and arrives in Helsinki having stowed away on a coal freighter. Waldemar Wikström (Sakari Kuosmanen) is a shirt salesman who leaves his business and his wife to take over *The Golden Pint*, a struggling restaurant. The pair meet when Khaled, fleeing deportation, is discovered sleeping behind the restaurant bins by Wikström, who then gives him a job. The political motivation of the film is clear. In Berlin, Kaurismäki joked: "[With *Le Havre*] I wanted to change the world. But my manipulative abilities are not good enough, so I think I have to limit it to change Europe."²⁶ Uniquely in his oeuvre, the tone of

the film becomes earnest on occasions, especially when Khaled gives an unusually lengthy account of his travails crossing Europe, including losing touch with his sister on the trek.

Kaurismäki was 59 at the time of the film's release and Kuosmanen was a year older.²⁷ While the restaurant scenes in particular are very funny, the film is often suffused with an autumnal, elegiac tone. The dark skies and wet streets of Helsinki, repeated shots of falling leaves, and the institutional grey of three key locations (police station, refugee reception centre, and underground car park) reiterate this sense. [Figure 0.2 here] Writing on late style as a distinct aesthetic, Edward Said borrows from Adorno's work on Beethoven to focus on "intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction".²⁸ In contrast to this recalcitrant, disruptive idiom that Adorno has termed "devoid of sweetness, bitter and spiny",²⁹ *The Other Side of Hope* is nearer to a consolidation of Kaurismäki's signature style than a radical, alienated questioning of it. Yet the film is clearly and self-consciously a late and perhaps final, work. Adorno warns against relegating late works "to the outer reaches of art, in the vicinity of document", whereby they are read as traces of the artist's biography or imminent death.³⁰ Attending to aesthetics can avoid this pitfall, and in the case of *The Other Side of Hope*, reveals a mix of stylistic repetition and innovation alongside foregrounded citations of some of the director's earlier films. The film contains relatively few allusions to other filmmakers, but makes several references to Kaurismäki's own work.³¹ A group of homeless people save Khaled from a night-time attack by a violent racist, much as M is rescued in *The Man Without a Past*. The dog belonging to staff at *The Golden Pint* is called Koistinen, in a nod to the protagonist of *Laitakaupungin valot / Lights in the Dusk* (2006). The lorry driver who smuggles Khaled's sister from Lithuania to Finland is called Melartin, after a character in *Shadows in Paradise*. And the ambiguous ending, in which the wounded Khaled sits under a tree awaiting possible rescue and is found

by Koistinen the dog, again recalls *Lights in the Dusk*, in which the human Koistinen (Janne Hyytiäinen) is gravely injured, but is found by the woman who loves him (Maria Heiskanen). At the time of writing it is impossible to say whether or not *The Other Side of Hope* is to be Kaurismäki's final film. What is certain is that it continues two patterns evident throughout his work: ongoing adjustments and shifts to a style that nevertheless remains recognisable as a signature aesthetic, and a lasting, political commitment to stories of the marginalized and excluded.

[Insert Figure 0.2 here]

Figure 0.2: Khaled (Sherwan Haji) in the reception centre in *The Other Side of Hope*.

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The first section of this book addresses intersections of time and space in Kaurismäki's cinema. Attending to these interfaces necessarily entails a consideration of the imbricating aesthetic and political dimensions of his work. Thomas Austin's chapter examines how the often-noted presence of anachronisms in Kaurismäki's mise en scène, along with multiple allusions to other filmmakers, both from the mid-20th century in particular, move beyond a simplistic nostalgia that recalls a lost past and instead work to reinforce a critique of neoliberalism's onslaught on social and economic spheres. Austin argues that the double refusal of verisimilitude mobilised by anachronism and allusion operates in tandem with, rather than against, the socially-engaged content of films such as *The Man Without a Past*, *Drift-*

ing *Clouds* and *Le Havre*, films which query the unattainability of their own narrative outcomes as moments which are politically desirable but currently appear utopian. Analysis of mise en scene is also central to Pietari Kääpä's contribution. Kääpä draws on ecocritical thinking to trace how Kaurismäki interrogates anthropocentric logic. His chapter centres on material objects, the corporeality of the human body, urban spaces and natural landscapes. For Kääpä, Kaurismäki's films are "contradictory in the sense that they often use elements generated by the superstructures they seek to criticise", but they nevertheless deploy methods of spatial disorientation and displacement to query dominant assumptions about social relations and to rethink the place of humanity in the ecosystem. Larissa Perski investigates the interrelationship of onscreen and offscreen spaces in Kaurismäki, including how he uses offscreen space in manifold ways in order to shape comic, melodramatic and fantastical moments. From *Shadows in Paradise* to *Le Havre*, acts of passion, violence, and the more or less miraculous repeatedly occur offscreen. Perski argues that the "volatile, uncertain terrain" of offscreen space facilitates the impossible, whether played for laughs or tears, and sets up a tension with more realistic elements in Kaurismäki's films. Eija Niskanen looks further afield to trace the bi-directional flow of aesthetic influences between Kaurismäki and filmmakers in Japan. Not only does Kaurismäki pay repeated homage to the work of Yasujiro Ozu, but, Niskanen argues, his own films have proved popular with a younger generation of Japanese directors including Nobuhiro Yamashita, Hirobumi Watanabe, Naoko Ogigami, and Riichiro Mashima.

Questions of tone and point of view are the focus of the second section. Jaakko Seppälä offers a rare close analysis of Kaurismäki's celebrated but largely taken for granted ironic tone, tracing how composition, framing, and editing patterns generate comedy and a sense of strangeness, producing disjunctions between characters' and audiences' perspectives. Seppälä locates a mild "surrealism of everyday life" and what he terms "ironic

minimalism” in the films. This tone accommodates both sincerity and oddity or absurdity, and is evident to viewers but rarely noticed by characters. Tonal complexity comes under scrutiny again in the chapter by Panos Kompatsiaris, which considers Kaurismäki’s sympathetic representations of working-class characters and associated indictment of the callous attitudes of state and capitalist elites. Paying particular attention to the Finland trilogy (1996-2006), Kompatsiaris explores how the moralizing tendencies of Kaurismäki’s class politics are tempered by absurdity and humour “that subvert any ‘final’ attempt to impose a form of ethical conduct”. He suggests that the films constitute an ambivalent populism, in that they adhere to two conflicting positions. Working-class characters’ pride in their work, desires for (heterosexual) love, and consumerist aspirations are legitimated but also parodied and criticised as the conformist consequences of alienation. The politics of class are also at the heart of Angelos Koutsourakis’ examination of the so-called proletarian trilogy (1986-1990). Koutsourakis draws on theories of cultural techniques in order to trace the films’ visualisation of the classed body at work and leisure, including how “characters carry the labour conditions of exploitation in their social interactions”. Crucially, Koutsourakis argues, the trilogy “does not solely show the body as being imprisoned in an alienated world, but also its potential to change”. Finally in this section, Andrew Nestingen asks, “how do Kaurismäki’s films generate [their] intense affective conclusions, and how can we make sense of them?” Drawing on critical approaches to the Hollywood musical from Jane Feuer, Richard Dyer, and Amy Herzog, Nestingen plots a different route through Kaurismäki’s irony to argue that, like American instances of the genre, his less spectacular films initially polarize reality and fantasy before working to reconcile this duality in redemptive and utopian, yet also ironic, final moments.

Performance is the theme of the book’s third section, which begins with two sustained close readings of acting technique. Henry Bacon offers a precise analysis of how *Drifting*

Clouds deploys different acting styles and levels of characterisation in its “delicate fusion of toned-down melodrama and farce”. He demonstrates an often-overlooked variety in Kaurismäki’s use of scripting and performance, that in *Drifting Clouds* ranges “all the way from classically realistic to fairly broadly caricatured characters”. Ulrike Hanstein focuses on *Hamlet Liikemaailmassa* (Hamlet Goes Business, 1987), exploring “the tension between hyperbolic dramatic action, the screen performers’ blatant underacting, and ostentatious cinematic mise en scène [and lighting]”. Hanstein analyses how this film noir styled adaptation of *Hamlet* displaces expressive functions from actor performance to mise en scène and framing, while also staging an inquiry into “the intricate relationships between playing, dissimulating, and performing”. Deadpan performance also comes under scrutiny in Michael Lawrence’s chapter, which focuses on Kaurismäki’s repeated use of both dogs and expressionless humans for comic effect. Lawrence traces links between facial opacity in both human and canine actors and argues that “because of our belief in the dog’s emotional inner life, the dog’s face confronts us with the same challenge as the face of a deadpan performer”. Underacting in humans “obscures the emotions we assume to be there”, while the typical inscrutability of Kaurismäki’s canine performers both contributes to and complicates “the comedy that is generated by facial inexpressivity”.

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This collection does not aspire to offer a comprehensive survey of Kaurismäki’s work across three decades. But it does hope to spur further scholarly engagement with this playful and political filmmaker, especially at a moment when the accelerating pace of capitalism’s “gale of creative destruction”³² makes his films about the casualties of this maelstrom appear ever more pertinent and necessary.

Notes

¹ Lesley Stern, 'Paths that wind through the thicket of things', *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 324.

² Kaurismäki stated at the 2017 Berlin film festival that he would not make another film. 'Legendary filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki: There will be no more films', yle.fi, online at: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/legendary_filmaker_aki_kaurismaki_there_will_be_no_more_films/9464504

³ Several of his films are also highly androcentric, notably *Calamari Union*, *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*, *Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses*, and *Pidä huivista kiinni, Tatjana* (Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatiana).

⁴ Seppälä, 'On the Heterogeneity of Cinematography in the Films of Aki Kaurismäki', *Projections* 9, no. 2 (2015): 36. Seppälä argues that Kaurismäki's film style can be divided into three distinct phases: early films (1983-89), slow films (1993-96) and late films (since 1999). He notes that although Kaurismäki's films "can be described as slow, his ASLs [average shot lengths] are not even near the extremes of slow cinema", and that he counterbalances long takes with short takes. Kaurismäki deploys "small and understated" camera movements, and tends to use reverse angles at around half the average rate of recent Hollywood. Seppälä, pp. 26,29, 31.

⁵ Jeroen Vandaele, 'Humour mechanisms in film comedy: incongruity and superiority', *Poetics Today* 23, no. 2, (2002): 227, 223.

⁶ Kaurismäki quoted in Thorsten Stecher, 'Das Weltwoche-Gespräch: Ich glaube an Baum, nicht an Gott' *Die Weltwoche*, 37, no. 2 (2002): 12, <http://www.weltwoche.ch/ausgaben/2002-37/artikel-2002-37-ich-glaube-an-ba.html>, np. See also similar remarks made at the press conference for *The Other Side of Hope*, Berlinale, 14 February 2017. Available at: https://www.berlinale.de/en/im_fokus/videostreaming/videos/06_streaming_long_versions_2017_41341.html?openedFromSearch=true

⁷ *Juha* (1999), an adaptation of the 1911 Finnish novel in the style of a silent melodrama, retains Kaurismäki's relatively undemonstrative performance style, and is heavily reliant on a score by Anssi Tikanmäki. In a film with no recorded speech and very few sound effects, those that are heard become endowed with particular significance, notably in the figuration of character interiority. Thus, when Juha (Sakari Kuosmanen) decides to leave his farm and travel to the city to track down his wife Marja (Outinen) and the

smiling villain Shemeikka (André Wilms) who has lured her away and put her in a brothel, his determination is encrypted in two actions which, crucially, can be heard as well as seen: sharpening an axe, signifying intended revenge, and shaving with an electric razor, signifying a trip to the city.

⁸ Kaurismäki quoted in Peter von Bagh, *Aki Kaurismäki* (Cahiers du Cinema, 2006, trans Anne Colin du Terrail), 189.

⁹ “ ‘Sex and violence you will never see. [...] For most of my fellow filmmakers sex and violence [is] in the foreground. I care about the other forms of human behaviour.’ Why do your characters never laugh or cry? ‘They do not run either.’” Stecher, ‘*Das Weltwoche-Gespräch*’. A very rare exception is Khaled (Sherwan Haji) running to escape the police in *The Other Side of Hope*.

¹⁰ See Andrew Nestingen, *The Cinema of Aki Kaurismäki: Contrarian Stories* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2013), 40.

¹¹ Mary Ann Doane, ‘The close-up: scale and detail in the cinema’, *Differences*, 14, no.3 (2003): 96.

¹² Esa Mäkinen, ‘Akateemikko Kaurismäen julkikuva on tarkasti luotu’, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 22 May 2008, np; quoted in Nestingen, *The Cinema of Aki Kaurismäki*, 79.

¹³ See for instance Simon Hattenstone, ‘Seven rounds with Aki Kaurismäki’, *The Guardian*, 4 April 2012. online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/apr/04/aki-kaurismaki-le-havre-interview>

¹⁴ Peter von Bagh, *Aki Kaurismäki*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 2006); *Kaurismäki über Kaurismäki*, Alexander Verlag Berlin; *Aki Kaurismäki*, Cahiers du Cinema, 2006, trans Anne Colin du Terrail. I have made use of the French version in this book. Von Bagh also discusses the Midnight Sun film festival, founded in 1986 with input from himself and both Kaurismäki brothers.

¹⁵ Von Bagh, *Aki Kaurismäki*, (my translation), 51-52.

¹⁶ Nestingen, *The Cinema of Aki Kaurismäki*, 5. Nestingen argues that four stories recur in the discourses that have shaped Kaurismäki and his cinema: the auteur, the bohemian, the nostalgic and the Finn.

¹⁷ Nestingen, 4-5.

¹⁸ Nestingen, 7.

¹⁹ Nestingen, 81. Nestingen notes: “The central study of Kaurismäki’s films in Finnish by Lauri Timonen distances itself from any analysis of the economic dimensions of Kaurismäki’s cinema.” He is referring to Timonen, *Aki Kaurismäen Elokuvat* (Helsinki: Otava, 2006).

²⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, 'The global author: control, creative constraints and performative self-contradiction', in *The Global Auteur: The politics of authorship in 21st century cinema*, ed. Seung-hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 39.

²¹ Elsaesser, 25. He also indicts the festival circuit for colluding with cultural tourism and demanding "a kind of 'self-exoticising'" from festival films. Elsaesser., p.25. For how the director of the Finnish Film Foundation attempted to promote Kaurismäki's work through a similar logic of marketable alterity, see Nestingen, 81.

²² Elsaesser, 'The global author', 27-28.

²³ "I don't use much on materials or supplies, so the cost is significantly less for me than for others. [...] The productions have really been Finnish-German-French cooperation for years. The Germans and French have their funding sources, which they want included in the credits. [...] I maintain one hundred percent control of the films' rights, despite the number of parties involved. They only receive distribution rights. [...] these are relationships based on trust. [...] I make films so cheap that no one takes on a large risk." Nestingen, *The Cinema of Aki Kaurismäki*, 142.

²⁴ <https://www.finder.fi/Elokuvien+levityt+ja+jakelu/Sputnik+Oy/Helsinki/yhteystiedot/345299>. The first international sales agent for Kaurismäki's films was World Sales Christa Saredi. When this company closed, Bavaria Film picked up the role. The current distributor is The Match Factory GmbH, which sells regional distribution rights. Under their operation *Ariel* (1988) was screened in 14 territories outside Finland, while *The Man Without a Past* (2002) was screened in 21 and *Le Havre* (2010) in 34 markets, ranging from South America to Romania to South Korea.

²⁵ <http://andorra.fi>

²⁶ Press conference, Berlin film festival, 14 February, 2017. Available at https://www.berlinale.de/en/im_fokus/videostreaming/videos/06_streaming_long_versions_2017_41341.html?openedFromSearch=true. For a further discussion of the politics of *Le Havre* and *The Other Side of Hope*, see Thomas Austin, 'Miserable journeys, symbolic rescues: refugees and migrants in the cinema of Fortress Europe', forthcoming.

²⁷ Haji was 31.

²⁸ Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 7.

²⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (University of California Press, 2002), 564, cited in Said, 12.

³⁰ Adorno, *Essays on Music*, 564, cited in Said, 9. 19

³¹ However, one of the thugs is played by the Finnish film director Dome Karukoski. Thanks to Jaakko Seppälä on this point.

³² Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (Allen and Unwin, 1954), 87.